

From: John Christie
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 1/23/02 8:45am
Subject: Microsoft Settlement

To Whom It May Concern,

The proposed settlement with Microsoft is a bad idea. At no time in history has the DOJ so clearly shirked its duty as in this case of a world power monopolist who repeatedly, and without remorse or conscience, egregiously extends that monopoly illegally.

I was prompted to write today as I overheard others arguing the case. While I was listening I noticed that those who are in favor of harsh penalties to Microsoft seemed to have a hard time coming up with specifics on what the monopoly has really cost America. The only rebuttals seem to be, "It cost competition in the marketplace, which would surely have made things better somehow." Unfortunately, that somehow is poorly defined. But, it needn't be that way.

Imagine there was competition in the software marketplace...

Now, think of all of the little things every day that you put up with in Microsoft products that you do not like but feel that you have to live with - every time something have happened and you said, "what are you going to do?" That file is incompatible? my computer crashed! What, another virus! Why is this so slow! Why isn't there an easier solution? You want how much to update Windows! What do you mean I don't own the software!

The list of things that bother Americans day to day here is probably rather extensive. If there were real competition how long do you believe that these problems would last. Or, consider a corollary, imagine if Ford had a world wide monopoly in the automobile market from very close to its inception, and that it was free to extend and maintain that monopoly any way it wished. Does anyone really believe that we would have moved much beyond the Model T?

In addition, there are some real costs that one can assign to this monopoly. Every time you hear on CNN of a Microsoft security hole that cost America 10's of millions of dollars, you can blame the monopoly. Every time there is a virus that chews up millions of hours of labor and internet bandwidth, feel free to blame the monopoly. Every notice about a cost to America for some computing defect that is extremely widespread should cause every American to raise a finger and point it at Microsoft. Would we be putting up with any of this if it were not a monopoly? Would we feel technologically helpless if it were not an illegally enforced and extended monopoly?

Microsoft made over 2 billion dollars last quarter. With that money they could have afforded to clean up all of the security and virus messes they made over the three months. But, they have no accountability on top of being a monopoly. Imagine Ford saying to America, "if you have a problem with the Firestone tires just go get different ones, we can't be responsible for these kinds of things."

Microsoft's monopoly has provided political power as well as commercial. Please enforce the Sherman Act to the fullest against this company. There will be no joy in Mudville until that occurs.

John Christie